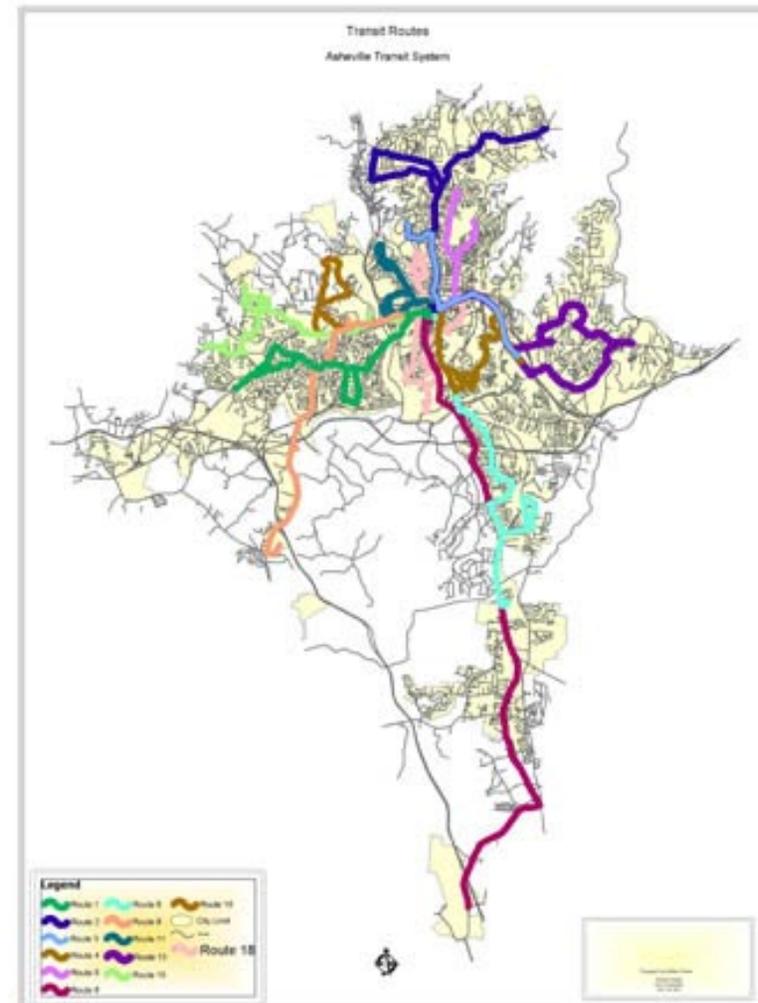


The Importance of Transit

Asheville's topography places serious constraints on its transportation network. Existing roadways are not well connected and, in many cases, are constrained from being widened. Consequently, the usual traffic engineering solutions to the problem of roadway congestion are not available. It is necessary to rely more and more heavily on the transit system to overcome these obstacles in order to relieve congestion.

Transit requires moderately high residential densities in order to operate efficiently. Technical studies have determined that a minimum density of between 8 and 16 units an acre is necessary for optimum transit performance. Very few areas in Asheville have this level of density, as illustrated on Map 9, page 106, although the proposed Smart Growth development pattern has the potential of resolving this to some extent along the City's major transportation corridors. Map 14, page 152, illustrates this future development pattern, including some recently approved urban village and multifamily projects.



In addition to the density issue, transit faces a major public perception problem. It is less convenient than the personal automobile, and most people believe that transit is the mode of transportation choice only for the poor. These perceptions need to be overcome through effective route management, public education campaigns, attractive and convenient transit shelters, and improving the transit-riding experience. The Transit Authority has implemented a number of improved routes to enhance rider convenience, has added bicycle carriers to its buses in order to link two modes of transportation, and is working on the provision of more transit shelters. However, substantial changes need to occur in order to increase ridership to the extent necessary to address congestion problems throughout the transportation network.

Interstate Highways

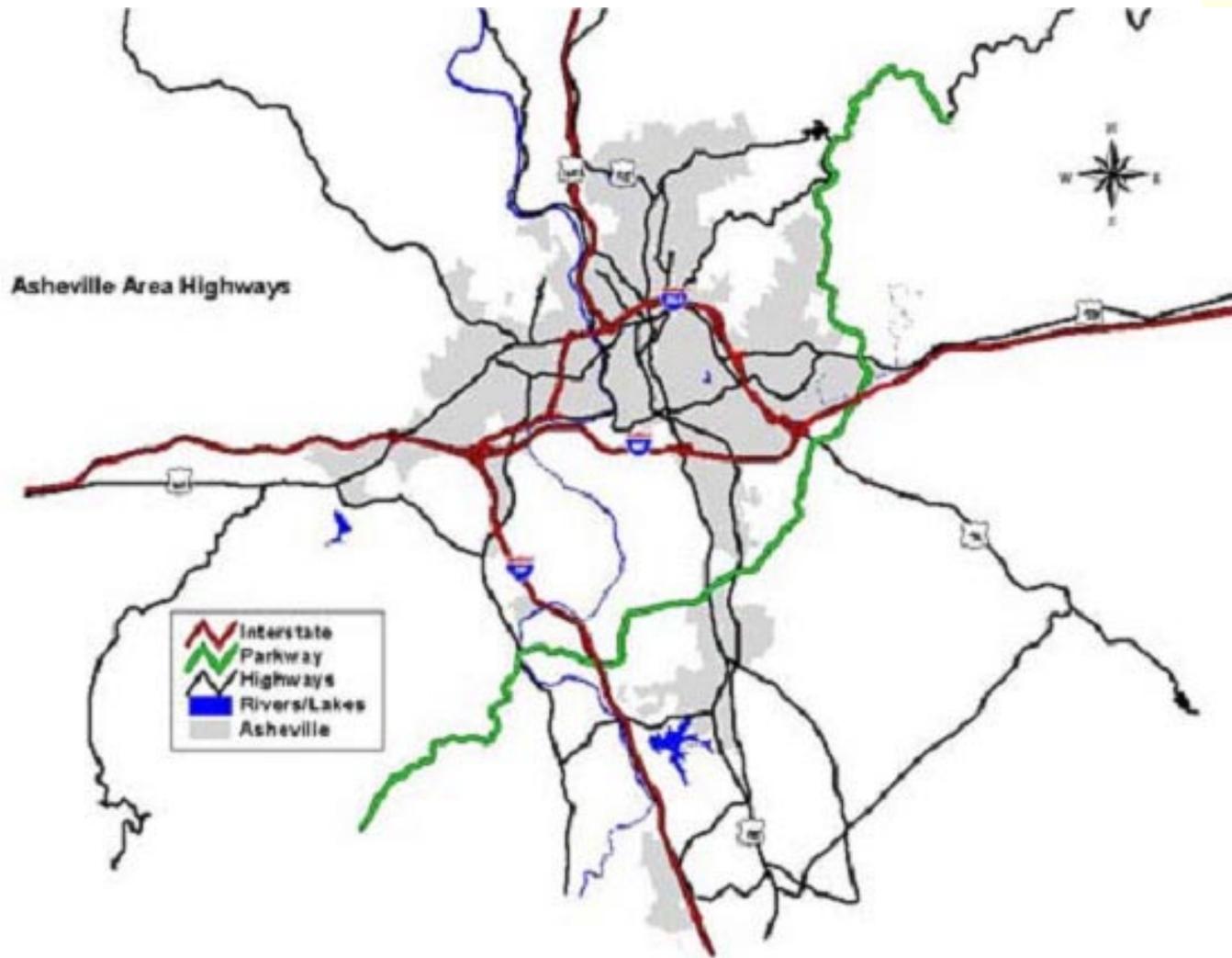
“State highways are the backbone of Asheville’s thoroughfare system.” Asheville City Plan 1925

John Nolen’s statement about Asheville’s transportation system is just as valid today as it

was in 1925. This is especially true with regard to the interstate system through Asheville. Two interstate highways meet in Asheville – I-40 and I-26. In addition, Asheville is served by an interstate loop – I-240. I-26 currently terminates in Asheville, but construction designed to complete this interstate through Tennessee and into Ohio is well underway, with the final segment being the so-called “I-26 Connector” that will link the converted US 19/23 to I-240. Current projections show that link to be complete in 2010. Map 13 (page 139) illustrates the Asheville area interstate system, with the Connector link and converted US 19/23 designated by a dashed line.

Interstate highways are constructed to promote the movement of goods and people between states and regions. However, due to the lack of connectivity and other limitations of Asheville’s existing local street system, interstate highways play a dominant role in handling local traffic. NCDOT estimates that 80 percent of the traffic on the Connector will be local traffic. This need for interstates to handle local traffic has resulted in traffic volume projections that appear to warrant widening of the existing segment of I-26 south of





Map 13

"I'm pretty sure that ten years from now, when you and I are driving on this Connector, it will be a much better road and asset for our community than it would have been without the committee's efforts."

Lou Bissette, Co-Chair, Community Coordinating Committee

I-40. Plans are underway to widen I-26 to six lanes in Henderson County to the Buncombe County line and further discussion is

occurring regarding extending that project north to I-40.

I-26 Connector

The route that the Connector takes and the extent to which I-26 is to be widened are topics of great controversy in the City of Asheville. Concerns include impacts on community character, promotion of economic development, loss of businesses and housing, public safety, construction noise and congestion, business access during construction, and further inducement of a sprawl development pattern. To address these concerns, in 1999, the Asheville City Council and the Asheville Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization supported the creation of an independent committee to examine the study the issues and provide recommendations. This committee was named the Community Coordinating Committee or CCC.

The CCC was assembled to provide a representative range of input on the I-26 Connector project and to coordinate the associated public involvement process. Constituted in April, 2000, the CCC was charged by the Asheville City Council with developing an effective method of gaining extensive public input on the Connector projects while simultaneously keeping the project on schedule.

Pursuant to this charge, the Committee organized the I-26 Education Forum on June 15, 2000 and the I-26 Design Forum on July 21 and 22, 2000. These forum events were extremely well-attended and offered the public a significant opportunity to learn more about the Connector project as well as to provide local guidance into the design of the project. Both events were held with the full knowledge and cooperation of the North Carolina Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration.

Members of the CCC included representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, I-26 Connector Awareness Group, Council of Independent Business Owners, City of Asheville, Buncombe County, Town of Weaverville, Land of Sky Regional Council, affected neighbor-



I-26 Committee a Model of Solid, Productive Community Cooperation

A few months ago, Brownie Newman and Lou Bissette would have seemed an unlikely team. Co-chair of the Western North Carolina Alliance, Newman is an environmental activist and one of the young turks challenging the way things have always been done. An attorney, Bissette is a former mayor of Asheville, and firmly ensconced in the city's old-guard establishment. But these days they're singing the same tune, and in harmony, no less.

Bissette chairs, and Newman co-chairs, the I-26 Connector Community Coordinating Committee, appointed by Asheville City Council in April to provide a representative range of input on the I-26 Connector project and coordinate the associated public involvement process. Bissette laughs now about his reaction when he saw the list of people who'd been appointed to the committee and admits he had serious reservations about whether they'd be able to get anything done. But with Newman as co-chair, they laid down some ground rules: no personal attacks; we're seeking agreement, not a vote; and the project must be completed on time.

"Every meeting got better and better," Bissette says.

The committee wisely decided to begin the process of public involvement with an Education Forum held June 15. They brought in highway experts from other states, state Department of Transportation engineers, city planners and others to talk about different aspects of the connector design. Hundreds of people came and learned about the complexity and the possibilities. Five weeks later, the committee sponsored a design forum at which hundreds more came to share their views and help chart the course of the project. Reluctant at first, state DOT engineers became more and more engaged in the process as it proceeded.

"At first we were having to drag them along," says Newman, "They're nice people but they're all engineers. They were not used to dealing with big crowds of people. But by the time we got to the design forum, they really got into this thing."

The design forum produced hundreds of ideas. The committee has prioritized them into a manageable number of goals and produced a report with nine key project goals for DOT to use in designing the project. They've also established criteria for measuring whether each of the goals is met.

The process has been so successful it is a potential model for civic engagement, as guest columnist and board member of Smart Growth partners of Western North Carolina Andrew Euston wrote in August. It is certainly a model for North Carolina communities who want more self-determination introduced into the process of designing highway projects. More importantly, it's been a tremendous community building experience for Asheville.

It's a long way from here to a finished road that meets the design goals, but there's every reason to believe DOT will work to incorporate them in the project.

Here's a salute to Bissette, Newman and all those citizens who wanted to make their city a better place and were willing to take on one of the most formidable bureaucracies anywhere to make it happen.

Asheville Citizen-Times Editorial; September 17, 2000

"Traffic congestions remedies should not be expected to eliminate the problem altogether. Rather, they should aim to (1) reduce the duration of maximum congestion appreciably, (2) reduce the average length of time required for commuting, (3) increase the average commuting speed, (4) increase the proportion of all commuters traveling during periods of maximum convenience, and (5) reduce the intensity of commuter frustration."

Anthony Downs, Stuck in Traffic, 1992

hood groups and landowners, RiverLink, the Western North Carolina Alliance, and a variety of other groups and organizations. This broad representation resulted in considerable

credibility for the Committee's final recommendations. These recommendations were:

- The alternative alignment concept developed at the Design Forum should receive serious study for inclusion in the project Environmental Impact Statement.
 - The NCDOT, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and local citizens should work together as a "Committee on Visual Design" to develop ideas for bridge design, signage, overpass design, landscaping and other aesthetic issues that reflect our community's character.
 - The NCDOT and FHWA should expedite the development of new and updated traffic models for use on the ultimate design of this project, including regional air quality modeling.
- The NCDOT and FHWA should explore engineering and signage options to improve the north-to-east connection of eastbound I-26 traffic with I-40 in an easterly direction as part of this project or a simultaneous project. The specific concerns involve limiting commercial truck through-traffic on I-240 and on lesser-classified roadways proximate to residential areas.
 - Roadway design should reflect the Committee's general consensus that the bicycle and pedestrian connectivity be restored to link neighborhoods and the French Broad River while simultaneously exploring traffic calming measures to reduce the vehicular impact on residential streets.
 - The NCDOT and FHWA should ensure that all interchange design is community sensitive. To achieve this end, it would be helpful to provide artist's renditions of feasible design alternatives for public review.
 - The NCDOT and FHWA should seriously examine safety issues in project construction and design including maintenance of traffic during construction and emergency

- access after construction.
- The NCDOT and FHWA should release any unneeded right-of-way at the completion of this project to the City of Asheville to be zoned and used in accordance with a land use plan to be developed by the City in cooperation with the NCDOT.
 - The NCDOT and FHWA should keep the I-26 Connector project on its current or, preferably, an expedited schedule.

The Asheville City Council and the Asheville Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization unanimously approved these recommendations in 2000 and they have been forwarded to the NCDOT and FHWA as clear indicators of community consensus. Since that time, the CCC has endorsed further study of four alternatives for Connector design. Two of these alternatives - Alternatives 4 and 5 - achieve an important local goal of separating interstate traffic from local traffic in the vicinity of the Smoky Park bridges in order to improve safety and reduce congestion. The other two alternatives - Alternatives 2 and 3 - were previously developed by NCDOT in advance of community input that occurred in 2000. The Committee continues to work closely with

NCDOT, FHWA, City, and MPO staff to see that all of the CCC recommendations are implemented to the extent possible given the complex design constraints associated with this project.

I-40

There are no current plans to widen I-40, although the MPO has identified the need for a new interchange west of Asheville in the vicinity of Dogwood Road. An interchange project at Sweeten Creek Road was completed in 2001. A full interchange with I-26 has been added to the I-26 Connector project along with improvements to the I-40 Enka/Candler interchange with 19-23 (Smoky Park Highway). Another new interchange providing access to the Biltmore Estate and the Riverside Parkway is being studied.

I-240

I-240 creates a loop that connects West Asheville, Downtown Asheville, the Tunnel Road regional business node, and East Asheville along a scenic route that crosses the French Broad River, skirts the north side of Downtown Asheville with its historic skyline, and passes through a “cut” in Beaucatcher

Mountain. Due to these scenic qualities and the importance of I-240 to local and regional access to Downtown and the principal centers of commerce of East and West Asheville, any modifications to this interstate loop require careful consideration relative to community appearance and economic development goals. Every opportunity should be taken to improve interchange functioning, interconnectivity of the local transportation system across the interstate, and the visual appearance of the road. Projects such as the I-26 Connector and the proposed improvements to the Merrimon Avenue interchange should be examined closely for the potential to address these community goals.

Rail Transportation

Rail transportation to Asheville is currently limited to freight service provided by Norfolk-Southern Railway. As a result of demand for passenger service to Asheville, the Rail Division of NCDOT has been working with City staff to bring passenger Rail (AMTRAK) service to the City. The passenger trains will use the existing rail owned by Norfolk-Southern. A site in Biltmore Station near historic

Biltmore Village has been selected for the passenger station and the site has been surveyed and appraised. An architect has been hired to develop a conceptual plan for the station. Upon approval of the conceptual plan, the site will be acquired and construction will begin.

The projected date for bringing passenger rail service to Asheville is 2005, although state budget issues may result in the postponement beyond that date. It is envisioned that this passenger rail station will serve as a multi-modal hub for passenger rail, Asheville fixed-route bus transit, and commercial inter-city bus transit. In addition, the Biltmore Village area is a walkable historic village, and will serve significant pedestrian traffic. There are also plans to tie the passenger rail station into the Asheville greenway system. The extension of passenger rail service to Asheville will provide an important alternative mode of travel for residents of and visitors to the region.

In the first few years of rail service, the number of passengers might be small. But over time, as the number of passengers grows, this rail station presents the opportunity to be a

real multimodal connection. At this location, people will be able to transition from inter-city travel by rail to intra-city travel by bus, by bike, by car, or on foot. This hub will be a long-term fixture in the transit system. For all of these reasons, construction of the station should be supplemented by improvements that will accommodate a bus transfer facility, and surrounding roadway improvements. Roadway and traffic signal improvements may be needed on Biltmore Avenue, Thompson Street, Decatur Street and Elliot Street. Additionally, a pedestrian crossing will be needed over the railroad tracks linking the Biltmore Station area with the Biltmore Village shopping district. These infrastructure improvements will be a vital part of creating a true multimodal center in conjunction with passenger rail service to Asheville.

Air Transportation

The Asheville area is served by the Asheville Regional Airport (FAA call letters AVL). The Airport provides general aviation and commercial air service with a full-service terminal building, air traffic control tower, and an 8000 foot runway. AVL is a major economic genera-

tor for the community, with an estimated \$199.8 million in annual direct, indirect and multiplier benefits, creating an estimated 2,956 jobs. General aviation accounts for 70-80% of total air movements at the Airport.

The Airport is managed by a professional airport director whose work is overseen by an independent airport authority whose members are appointed by the Asheville City Council and the Buncombe County Board of County Commissioners. The Airport Authority is in the process of updating AVL's master plan. The plan calls for a variety of short-term, intermediate, and long-term improvements to the Airport. These improvements will be paid for by federal and state air transportation improvement funds. These improvements are described in more detail below.

A significant issue affecting the Airport involves the degree to which it is constrained by the limited property it owns and by the surrounding roadway network. Land is needed for facilities expansion and for a parallel runway. Typically, when an airport reaches 60 percent of its runway capacity, it should begin planning for additional runway space; AVL is slightly

Buildings are much like their human users. *Conversation* between buildings, as among humans, is a poignant sign of neighborliness. It is the height of rudeness--though all too often the expected norm in cities--for neighbors to speak not a word to each other for years on end. Buildings which do not *talk* to their neighbors are also rude.

"Fitting In", *City Comforts: How to Build An Urban Village*, 1995

over 50 percent of its runway capacity at the current time. The estimated cost for runway construction is roughly \$20 million. These land acquisition and construction costs are not included

in the figures below.

Short-term improvements (0-5 years):

- Parking, baggage claim, restaurant, regional hold room expansion, and other operational improvements.
- Relocate rental cars to south side of Airport.
- Relocate air traffic control tower.
- Possible conversion of existing rental car lot to taxi and bus area.
- Total cost: \$20.5 million.

Intermediate improvements (6-10 years):

- Various terminal improvements, including additional waiting area, ticketing space, and possible parking structure.
- General aviation additions.
- Total cost: \$18.4 million.

Long-term improvements (11-20 years)

- Resolving gate constraints.
- Additional public parking.
- Terminal building expansions.
- General aviation additions.
- Total cost: \$13.1 million (not including land acquisition and parallel runway construction).

The Asheville Regional Airport is a critical component in our local transportation picture, as well as a major economic generator for the community.

Air Quality

The scenic beauty and vitality of the Asheville area, and the health of area citizens is threatened by increasing air quality problems. Topographically, the Asheville area is prone to "inversion" episodes that trap pollutants within the Asheville basin. The pollutant that causes the most concern in the Asheville area is ozone. A significant contributor to this problem is the nitrogen oxides from power plants in the Tennessee Valley Authority, and other

sources outside the region. Although outside sources contribute some of the pollutants, local sources, including mobile sources such as autos and trucks, are still a significant factor in local ozone pollution problems.

This fact underscores the need to have a balanced, multi-modal approach to transportation planning. Strategies must be devised to address mobile source pollutants by reducing vehicle miles traveled, increasing vehicle occupancy, and promoting bicycling, walking, and transit use as convenient alternatives to the automobile. Alternative transportation modes can be especially effective in reducing the most polluting short vehicle trips. In addition, transportation planning and land use planning must be coordinated to reduce dependence on the automobile.

The Environmental Protection Agency has established National Ambient Air Quality Standards for pollutants such as ozone. The level of ozone pollution in the Asheville area is monitored at stations throughout the region. If it is determined that the level of ozone pollution exceeds the EPA standards, the Asheville area will be classified as “non-attain-

Transportation Planning and Public Involvement

Public involvement is an integral part of making enlightened transportation decisions that benefit the entire community. Transportation decisions have far-reaching impacts on growth patterns, economic development, and quality of life. The Asheville Area MPO has an adopted Public Involvement Policy, to guide local transportation decision-makers and to ensure that the public has a voice in these decisions. According to the policy, public involvement in transportation decision-making in Asheville should include a variety of techniques including public notices, comment periods, workshops, charrettes, public hearings, newsletters, surveys, and media outreach. The techniques employed will vary, depending on the specific planning task. The following is an excerpt from the policy:

“The purpose of the AMPO Public Involvement Policy is to create an open decision-making process whereby citizens have the opportunity to be involved at all stages of the transportation planning process. This policy is designed to ensure that transportation decisions will reflect public priorities.”

Objectives of AMPO Public Involvement Policy

- Bring a broad cross-section of the public into the public policy and transportation planning decision-making process.
- Maintain public involvement from the early stages of the planning process through detailed project development.
- Use different combinations of public involvement techniques to meet the diverse needs of the general public.
- Determine the public's knowledge of the metropolitan transportation system and the public's values and attitudes concerning transportation.
- Educate citizens and elected officials in order to increase general understanding of transportation issues.
- Make technical and other information available to the public.
- Establish a channel for an effective feedback process.
- Evaluate the public involvement process and procedures to assess their success at meeting requirements specified in the ISTEA, TEA-21, NEPA, and the Interim FTA/FHWA Guidance on Public Participation.”

“Buncombe County has some of the highest levels of air toxins in the state – pollutants that have been linked to serious health problems”

Asheville Citizen Times; March 1, 2002

ment.” A status of non-attainment means a much greater level of responsibility in the area of transportation to prove

that transportation improvements do not worsen the air quality problems.

Based on recent air quality monitoring, it is likely that Buncombe County may be designated as an air quality non-attainment area by the EPA. This designation may come sometime in 2003 unless it is avoided through the Early Action Compact Process described below. Non-attainment means that an area has exceeded acceptable levels of certain air pollutants in the air. For Buncombe County these pollutants are ozone and particulate matter.

The City of Asheville has entered into an Early Action Compact with EPA and several other cities and counties in order to develop regional solutions to air quality problems. The Compact, or its alternatives, means that our area will be required to take steps to reduce these pollutants. One of the greatest impacts of the designation will be on transportation

planning. Our area will be required to show that transportation plans and new transportation projects conform to the state’s plan to improve air quality in our region. If our plan does not conform, then transportation funding could be put in jeopardy. The EPA might also require other measures to improve air quality in the region – measures such as reformulated gasoline and vehicle emissions inspections.

There are important land use and transportation strategies to improve the air that we breathe. No single strategy will do the entire job. Clean-fuels vehicles in the private and public sectors will play an important role in reducing pollution from automobiles and trucks. We can also reduce auto pollution by promoting development patterns that allow people to walk from their homes to nearby shopping or services, or from one shopping area to another. We can reduce congestion through better signal timing and more efficient intersection design. And we can place a greater emphasis on modes of transportation that reduce reliance on single-occupant vehicles such as carpooling, public transit, and bicycling.



Land Use and Transportation Goals and Strategies

Land Use

Goal I. The City should pursue compatible adaptive reuse, redevelopment and infill development, while insuring that sufficient infrastructure capacity exists or will be provided to accomodate this development.

Strategies

1. The City, in order to preserve architectural diversity and to protect neighborhood viability, should promote adaptive reuse of vacant or underutilized structures, while ensuring that neighborhood compatibility and public safety goals are met.
2. The City should actively promote infill development through property owner education and market-based regulatory solutions in order to address the tax equity, tax base enhancement, and Smart Growth development goals of the City.
3. The City should continue to use flexible

development standards to enable infill lots to meet development standards. These standards should be revised as necessary to address the development of infill lots.

4. The City should amend development standards to permit/require more intense mixed-use development at underdeveloped commercial nodes where excess public facilities exist.
5. The City's economic development incentive program should be reviewed to determine if incentives can be offered for infill development along commercial corridors and at commercial nodes identified as key areas for infill development.
6. Through with the City's Economic Development office, identify and market brownfield sites, giving preference to the development of these sites.
7. Permit lots as originally platted to be developed provided they meet access requirements and the development would be in harmony with the character of the neighborhood.

8. Provide incentives for the development of infill lots. These incentives could include a waiver or reductions of permit fees, elimination of excessive requirements, and expedited review.
9. Identify infill opportunities and make this information available to interested developers. The information could include identification of properties available for infill, incentives for development of these properties, and development/design standards.
10. Provide assistance and incentives for

compatible redevelopment in older neighborhoods. The assistance and incentives could include waiver of permit fees, improvement of infrastructure and/or amenities, and making surplus City-owned land available for development.

11. Permit more intense development in some areas. Areas identified for more intense development could include transit nodes, underdeveloped areas where excess public facilities exist, areas proximate to the Central Business District and targeted infill areas. Development should be in accordance

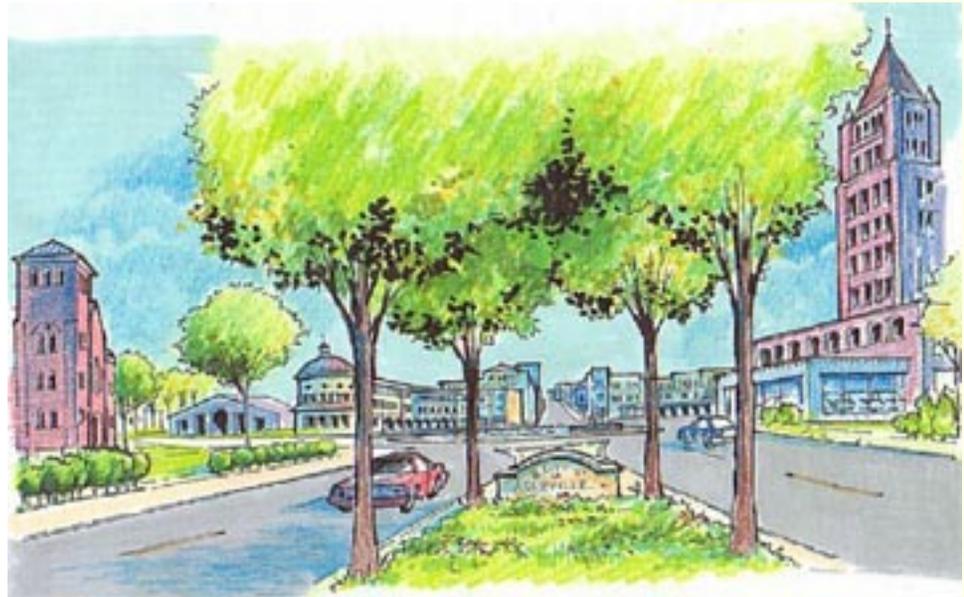


Broadway Corridor Master Plan; from Community Corridors, LLC

West End Clingman Avenue Conceptual Designs

with infill design standards tailored to single family and multi-family residential, mixed-use, commercial, and industrial areas.

12. Provide density bonuses as a stimulus for infill development. Density bonuses should be provided for work force affordable housing, targeted infill areas, areas where excess public facilities exist, and brownfield sites. Development should be in accordance with design standards tailored for the areas.
13. Promote the advantages of infill development to developers and neighborhood groups. This can be done through presentations at regular meetings of these groups and at special workshops.
14. Working with other City departments, develop plans and policies for the enhancement and strengthening of existing neighborhoods. These plans and policies should address infrastructure improvements, amenities (parks, streetlights, landscaping, etc.), crime prevention, litter control, and code enforcement, as well as seeking ways to protect these neighborhoods from inappropriate non-residential encroachment. Five



From MHO/Corre Valle Valle Plan

neighborhoods specifically identified for this planning effort are Shiloh, Montford, Mission + St. Joseph's area, Burton Street, the east River Road area and East End.

15. The City should permit duplexes and other low intensity multifamily development meeting design and spacing requirements as a use by right subject to special requirements in single family zoning districts.
16. Appropriately scaled non-residential uses that serve residents of neighborhoods should be permitted in appropriate locations.
17. The City should have an aggressive program for the demolition of deteriorated and condemned structures in order to make land available for infill development.
18. Develop new regulatory tools for enhancing land use compatibility within existing neighborhoods including creation of large lot or rural zoning districts, neighborhood conservation overlay zones and similar measures.

Goal II. Implement a new urbanist develop-

ment pattern along selected commercial corridors and in infill areas where appropriate.

Strategies

1. Develop new zoning districts and development template requirements necessary to implement a new urbanist development pattern; apply these districts and development templates to selected commercial corridors.
2. Develop a new zoning district or zoning technique that will allow infill development to take advantage of new urbanist development principles where appropriate.
3. Promote wider use of the Urban Village zoning district by identifying sites where it may be appropriate and directing developer interest to those sites.
4. Continue to look for opportunities to expand the boundaries of the Central Business District to areas appropriate for that type of development.



A new model for transportation and land use planning? Case study: Merrimon Avenue

Consider Merrimon Avenue – the central artery in North Asheville – one of the most prominent and heavily traveled corridors in the region. Merrimon Avenue has long been identified as one of the corridors most in need of improvement. The current four-lane section on Merrimon is unsafe and frustrating for drivers. Vehicles make unpredictable movements into and out of driveways. Lanes often abruptly come to a halt when vehicles attempt to turn left. The sidewalks are narrow, and obstructed by signs and utility poles. The driveways are spaced so closely together that there is more “curb cut” than sidewalk along the street.

The result? Merrimon Avenue is a transportation corridor that doesn't work very well for anyone. Drivers are frustrated, access to businesses is obstructed during congested travel times, pedestrians feel unsafe and unwelcome, most bicyclists won't dare to ride this route. So, we ask the central question: Is there a transportation solution that will benefit the business environment, improve traffic flow, and at the same time provide an attractive environment for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders?

Traditional solutions to thoroughfares like Merrimon could be disastrous. Consider the results of a feasibility study for Merrimon conducted by The North Carolina Department of Transportation. The study identified an option for widening Merrimon Avenue to five lanes. The benefit? Traffic would have a shared center turn lane, which would improve traffic flow in the other lanes. The problem? A widening to five-lanes would require condemnation of xx number of Merrimon Avenue business and residents. And the cost? Fifty-five million dollars.

What if we looked for a solution to the problems on Merrimon Avenue with a whole new approach to transportation and land use planning. If we took the same 55 million dollars that it would take to widen Merrimon Avenue – and if there were no restrictions on how we could spend the money - what kind of creative improvements could we make? Consider the following budget, and how it might achieve all of the goals.

\$15 million - Turn lanes at congested intersections	\$5 million - Façade business appearance loan program
\$2 million - Coordinated signal system	\$10 million - Streetscape and pedestrian improvements
\$3 million – Access management improvements	\$5 million – Transit service improvements
\$15 million - Parking improvements for businesses	Total: \$55 million

With the budget outlined above, we could provide businesses with much needed parking improvements and at the same time, consolidate and eliminate driveways that contribute to congestion. Through signal timing and targeted capacity improvements, we could improve traffic flow and predictability for drivers. In addition, we could put unsightly utility wires underground and create a magnificent boulevard for residents and tourists alike. Merrimon Avenue could be a destination, where people stroll and shop and interact. On top of all this, we would have enough money left over to run a bus up and down Merrimon Avenue every 15 minutes.

Of course, the above scenario does not mean to suggest that, under the current system, we could spend federal highway money on improvements such a shared parking or transit service. But the above scenario serves to illustrate that there is a different model available for thinking about transportation improvements in a congested urban corridor. It is time for our transportation solutions to begin to address a wider range of goals, including economic development, business climate, air quality, pedestrian environments, and a balance of transportation modes.

Goal III. The City should permit and encourage transit supportive density (8-16 units per acre minimum) along and adjacent to major corridors and at logical transit nodes.

Strategies

1. Consider the development of a flexible zone that would permit higher density at appropriate locations within a five minute walk of transit stops. The higher density development should be in accordance with design standards tailored for these areas.
2. Require the provision of transit shelters in new commercial, office, mixed use and industrial developments that are of sufficient size to attract a significant transit ridership including larger residential developments containing a minimum density of 8 units per acre.

Goal IV. The City should revise its development standards for corridors to ensure that the corridors are developed in an urban manner.

Strategies

1. Development standards should be prepared for primary corridors that address the need to increase density along the corridors. The standards should provide incentives for mixed-use development that incorporates residential uses.
2. Minimum setbacks (or “build-to” lines) should be required, with buildings permitted to front on the street.
3. Prepare design guidelines for corridor development. Guidelines should promote an urban style (multi-story, pedestrian oriented) of architecture along the corridors.
4. Look for opportunities to create “transition points” where land use character changes e.g., a roundabout or entry marker where a commercial area stops and a neighborhood begins, a land use node that demarks the transition from one neighborhood to another.

Goal V. The City should encourage the construction of affordable housing

throughout the community.

Strategies

1. The City should provide administrative density bonuses for affordable housing in all zoning districts subject to design standards that ensure compatibility with the neighborhood.
2. The City should provide incentives for the inclusion of affordable housing in mixed use developments along corridors.
3. The City should pursue legislation authorizing inclusionary zoning for larger residential developments. Density bonuses and development incentives, carefully tailored to encourage the local development community to accommodate inclusionary zoning provisions, should be provided as a trade-off for the inclusion of affordable housing.
4. The City should revise its standards to provide for administrative approval of density bonuses for affordable housing.

Goal VI. Where appropriate, the City

should pursue statutory authority for a greater variety and range of development tools in order to actively promote development and redevelopment within the City and its ETJ.

Strategies

1. The City should pursue statutory authority for project development financing and selectively implement this development tool in neighborhoods like West End Clingman (WECAN) where significant public investment is necessary to correct deficiencies in public infrastructure pursuant to a redevelopment plan.
2. The City should pursue statutory authority for transfer of development rights in order to provide an opportunity to protect environmentally sensitive areas, scenic lands and farmland through a market-based regulatory incentive program.
3. The City should further investigate the benefits of land value taxation, and, if deemed appropriate for our local situation, pursue statutory authority for the applica-

tion of a land value taxation system for properties within the City.

4. The City should pursue statutory authority for mandatory design review for areas other than local historic districts in order to promote a Smart Growth development pattern by overcoming land use compatibility objections.

Goal VII. The City of Asheville should assure that it continues to serve as the regional commercial center for western North Carolina by providing opportunities for the location of large commercial uses within the City.

Strategies

1. The City should identify appropriate areas for the location of large commercial uses. These areas should be adequately served by public services, particularly transportation and public transit, be easy to access from the interstate highway system, and have vacant areas or areas with potential for redevelopment as regional shopping venues.
2. The City should refine its development

guidelines for large retail uses to ensure that the site and building design for these uses are reflective of the natural and architectural heritage of Asheville.

Goal VIII. The City should enhance its role as western North Carolina's regional medical and education center.

Strategies

1. The City should work with Mission-St. Joseph's Health System in the implementation of the Health System's Master Facilities Strategic Plan.
2. The City should continue to work with Mission-St. Joseph's Health System and other area property owners in the development and implementation of a streetscape plan for Biltmore Avenue from I-40 to Downtown.
3. Working with Mission-St. Joseph's Health System and other property owners in the area, the City should prepare a small area plan for the area around and including the Health Center to address the need for the

location medical and medical-related land uses in this area. Development of these uses should respect the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

4. The City should coordinate with the University of North Carolina-Asheville in the implementation of the UNCA Campus Master Plan.
5. Working with UNCA and the surrounding residential neighborhoods, the City should develop plans and policies to address the needs of the campus and of the surrounding neighborhoods.
6. The City should work with Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College (AB Tech) to address the needs of the college as it expands.
7. Provision of improved access to AB Tech should be considered during the development of the Riverside Parkway.

Goal IX. The City should ensure that the environmental quality and natural beauty of the area is protected as tracts of undevel-

oped land are subdivided and/or developed for residential development by providing alternative templates for the development.

Strategies

1. Incorporate conservation/open space design standards into the City's subdivision regulations. This alternative design template should be available to all subdivisions and required for those above a certain size and/or proposing development of sensitive lands (steep slopes, unique natural features, wetlands and flood plains, etc.).
2. The City should identify sensitive areas and steep slopes that should be treated with caution during development and prepare additional regulations that promote their protection while reasonably respecting private property rights; such regulations may include transfer of development rights.
3. The City should revise its standards to permit clustering of buildings in residential developments in order to avoid steep areas, ridgetops, wetlands, and other sensitive areas.

4. Revise the City’s open space standards to require the incorporation of more well-defined open space into the City’s land use pattern. Provide an option for the payment of a fee-in-lieu-of providing open space in developments.
5. The City’s open space standards should require the connection of open space areas where feasible and logical.
6. The City should develop a resource conservation zone that provides incentives for the protection/preservation of important natural resources during the development process.
7. The City should develop an “estate” zoning classification requiring very large lots to apply to selected areas when such a development pattern is already a part of the neighborhood or to protect critical environmental or open space areas.

Goal X. The City should assure that as land is developed or redeveloped, provision is made for access by various means of transportation.

Strategies

1. The City should revise its subdivision regulations to require pedestrian and, where feasible, vehicular connections within the subdivision and between the subdivision and adjacent property.
2. When development is proposed along an existing or future transit route, the City should require the construction of a transit stop or shelter as part of the development.
3. The City should continue to require sidewalks or other pedestrian walkways in all new development.

Goal XI. The City should work with property owners, institutions, and public and private agencies to enhance the streetscape along streets and roads in the City.

Strategies

1. The City should prepare streetscape design plans to serve as guide for development and treatment of the City’s streetscapes. Plans should be done for the City’s strategic areas,

such as Downtown, the river district, historic districts, and urban and neighborhood corridors. The streetscape plans should work to beautify these areas, reduce the environmental impacts of development, encourage pedestrian activity, and uniquely identify these areas. The streetscape design plan should provide for the following:

- An inventory of street trees.
 - A schedule and policy for replacement of street trees.
 - Streetscape design templates for different areas/categories of streets.
 - Appropriate setbacks and building heights for different areas/categories of streets.
2. The City should reevaluate how the public right-of-way is used. As part of this reevaluation, the following should be considered:
- Revision of the City's engineering standards to require street trees between the street and the sidewalk.
 - Permitting on-street parking on most streets.
 - Eliminating private use of the public right-of-way unless approved through a process

that evaluates the public costs and benefits of such use.

3. Preserve and reuse historic materials in public works projects.
4. As new development is proposed, encourage/provide incentives for developers to incorporate streetscape terminating vistas (public art, buildings) as part of their developments.
5. The City should work with businesses, residents, and community organizations to develop a sense of community pride and support of efforts to control litter.
6. The City should work with NCDOT to identify gateway areas and develop a streetscape/landscape plan, including signage, for each gateway that emphasizes each area as an important entrance to the City.
7. The City should work with local artists and community organizations to incorporate public art throughout the City of Asheville.

8. The City should work with utility companies to bury overhead utility lines as funding becomes available.
9. The Planning and Development Department staff should continue to work with the City's Urban Forester on better selection, placement, and care of street trees.
10. The City should develop an ordinance requiring tree pruning to be done according to accepted professional standards and practices.

Goal XII. The City should assure that new development and redevelopment is of high quality, complementing and adding to the character of the City of Asheville.

Strategies

1. Revise standards to require connectivity between parcels and development projects. Connectivity should include vehicular connections, frontage or service roads, alleys, and/or pedestrian connections.
2. Establish standards for building orientation

through the development of building templates that address build-to lines and site relationships.

3. Develop design templates for structures that promote contextual design.
4. Through revision of development standards, the City should eliminate the opportunity for suburban development in urban settings.
5. The City should identify areas for development focus, identifying and establishing standards for the type of development appropriate for the areas.
6. The City should develop design standards for multi-family structures and non-residential uses in single family areas.
7. The City should develop plans, programs, regulations and incentives for upgrading developed sites to meet new development standards.

Goal XIII. The City of Asheville should initiate discussions about the future land

use pattern outside the City’s jurisdiction with the appropriate local governments and independent authorities in order to promote and implement Smart Growth development concepts in this area.

Transportation Goals and Strategies

Goal I. The design of streets and highways should be consistent with the economic goals of the City of Asheville and should be compatible with the physical character of the community.

Strategies

1. Implement the road design concepts, as described elsewhere in this plan, for all new corridors and for any significant remedial expansions and improvements to existing corridors.
2. Road design should be “user-friendly” and attractive out of respect for the area’s tourist economy, including, but not limited to such items as: directional signage should be prominent and clear; interstate security fencing should use black-coated chain link and landscaping to hide the fencing; and

intersection “fixes” should avoid such mandatory merge movements such as the east-bound merge onto Tunnel Road from I-240.

3. Interstate roads should incorporate local construction materials and native landscaping into new corridors and any significant expansions to existing corridors; examples include: stone-faced overpasses; median landscaping; and landscaping of both sides of noise walls.
4. Where possible and desirable, median design should offer opportunities for vertical separation of opposing lanes of travel.
5. When not precluded by physical constraints, median design should be landscaped with both trees and shrubs. Creative design measures should be undertaken to overcome routine physical constraints such as median width limitations; a good example of such creative design is the median in the I-240 “cut” through Beaucatcher Mountain that creates an elevated landscaped median using a Jersey barrier design.
6. New billboards should not be allowed along any road corridors and existing ones should

be amortized and removed unless adjacent to federal aid primary highways.

7. Develop a comprehensive street classification system that includes long range goals for street width, development type, building setbacks, parking placement, and areas for right-of-way reservation.
8. City staff should perform regular evaluations of the area road network in order to determine whether the City should assume maintenance of state roads.
9. Formal proposals should be presented to the NCDOT offering to accept certain state roads if specific one-time improvements are made.
10. Regularly evaluate the appropriateness of assuming maintenance of State roads taken into the City through annexation.

Goal II. Develop a system of sidewalks, greenways and bicycle facilities that will make Asheville a more walkable and more livable city.

Strategies

1. As an expansion of the traffic calming program, create a “Walkable Intersection Program” as a cooperative effort between the City of Asheville and NCDOT. Intersections will be evaluated for changes in geometric design, signalization, signs, and markings that will benefit pedestrians.
2. Create pedestrian oriented zones throughout the City in tandem with urban villages and concentrated areas of development. Link the pedestrian oriented zones through attractive and usable pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
3. Pedestrian zones and identified pedestrian-thoroughfares should be incorporated into long-range transportation plans, and addressed during roadway facilities planning.
4. Greenways and other identified bicycle facility needs should be constructed in conjunction with roadway improvement projects. The Asheville Greenway Master Plan should be referenced in the planning of transportation improvements, and greenway right-of-way purchase and construction should be integrated into the process of roadway design

and construction.

5. Adopt land use strategies and site design standards that encourage bicycling and walking.
6. Implement the Greenway Master Plan and the Pedestrian Thoroughfare Plan using public funds, grant monies, and privately raised dollars by the Parks and Greenway Foundation.

Goal III. Maximize the efficiency of the existing transportation system through targeted, cost-effective improvements and programs.

Strategies

1. Upgrade the traffic signals in Asheville to create a state of the art coordinated system.
2. Pursue targeted capacity improvements at intersections to improve traffic flow, with particular emphasis on turning lanes and creative solutions such as roundabouts.
3. Access management should be an integral part of preserving traffic capacity and

improving pedestrian environments. Roadway improvements should always include access management strategies. Retrofit access management programs should be developed and implemented.

4. Develop plans and marketing materials to provide a strong local Transportation Demand Management Program, including updating the long-range transportation plan to provide a Transportation Demand Management component and working with the NCDOT to secure funding for such program.

Goal IV. Increase the level of investment in the transportation system to support economic development and promote quality of life.

1. Pursue a local funding source to support a variety of transportation improvements such as roadway and intersection improvements, greenways, sidewalks, streetscape improvements, and transit enhancements. Explore funding options that will equitably distribute the burden among those who use the transportation system.

2. Aggressively pursue local, state and national funding sources to implement the Asheville Pedestrian Thoroughfare Plan and the Greenways Master Plan.

Goal V. Develop a network of highways and thoroughfares that serves the long-range needs of the City of Asheville and the surrounding region.

Strategies

1. Based on the long-range street classification plan, implement a program for right-of-way protection, and right-of-way dedication as a part of the development review process.
2. As needed roadway improvements are identified, make design-related decisions early in the process.
3. Modify the Asheville subdivision regulations to require street connectivity and street stubs to adjacent property.
4. Develop a plan for the future of I-240 through downtown Asheville that will address projected traffic volumes, and provide good access to downtown and sur-

rounding neighborhoods. This plan should create a highway corridor with minimal impact on the urban environment. The plan should look for ways to “bury” or “hide” the highway and create opportunities urban scale development and parks that will link Downtown with surrounding neighborhoods and business districts.

Goal VI. Develop a transit system that is capable of meeting the needs of all residents of and visitors to the region.

Strategies

1. Promote a land use policy that is supportive of transit service, such as Urban Villages and nodal pedestrian-oriented development.
2. Expand service hours and frequency of service.
3. Provide service to the greatest possible number of households within the service area, with emphasis on those not possessing automobiles, blind and other partially impaired people, the elderly, tourists, environmentally conscious people, and other markets as they appear.

4. Expand inter-city service to Hendersonville, Black Mountain, Weaverville, Mars Hill, and Sylva.
5. Upgrade and expand amenities at the transit center and bus stops, including system maps, information systems, benches, and shelters.
6. Develop a multimodal approach to transit service, including integration with the train station when passenger rail operations begin in Asheville.
7. Increase community knowledge of the transit system through marketing.
8. Locate and implement informal park and ride areas.
9. Expand access to outlying recreational facilities in the Asheville area.
10. Continue to upgrade and expand pedestrian and bicycle facilities and services consequential to the use of the Asheville Transit System.

Goal VII. Provide viable passenger rail

service to Asheville and western North Carolina.

1. The City should continue to work with NCDOT, Norfolk-Southern Railway, and other agencies and individuals in the development of a passenger rail station at Biltmore Station.
2. Develop the passenger rail station as a multi-modal hub where people will be able to transition from inter-city travel by rail to intra-city travel by bus, by car, by bike, and on foot.
3. Construction of the rail station should accommodate a bus transfer facility.
4. Construct a pedestrian crossing over the railroad tracks to link Biltmore Station with Biltmore Village.
5. Implement roadway and traffic signal improvements on Biltmore Avenue, Thompson Street, Decatur Street, and Elliot Street as needed to accommodate traffic generated by the passenger rail station.

Goal VIII. Support improving transporta-

tion access to and from the airport.

Strategies

1. Work toward improving multimodal transportation access, primarily taxicab and mass transit transportation.
2. Examine the Airport's need for an additional interstate interchange in the Glen Bridge Road area.

Goal IX. Support the growth of the Asheville Regional Airport consistent with the general aviation and commercial air traffic demands as well as the operational needs of the Airport.

Strategies

1. Examine zoning requirements in the vicinity of the Airport to ensure that incompatible uses are prohibited; expand annexation efforts to bring more of this area under City of Asheville zoning jurisdiction as a means of implementing this strategy.
2. Support Airport Authority plans to insure adequate space for future growth.

Goal X. Develop and comprehensive set of implementation strategies intended to reduce local vehicle miles traveled in accordance with State of North Carolina transportation policies.

Strategies

1. Identify appropriate ways to measure local vehicle miles traveled in order to establish benchmarks for determining the effectiveness of any implementation strategy or strategies.
2. Develop a comprehensive approach to accomplishing Goal X through such efforts as establishing a Smart Growth development pattern, promoting multimodal transportation options, and prioritizing transportation funding priorities.
3. Work with other local governments and regional agencies to create a similar regional effort to reduce regional vehicle miles traveled in accordance with State of North Carolina transportation policies.